

'The Violence of History: Rosa Chacel's Memorias de Leticia Valle'

Lawless, G. (2016). 'The Violence of History: Rosa Chacel's Memorias de Leticia Valle'. *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 93(5), 511-529. <https://doi.org/10.3828/bhs.2016.31>

Published in:
Bulletin of Hispanic Studies

Document Version:
Peer reviewed version

Queen's University Belfast - Research Portal:
[Link to publication record in Queen's University Belfast Research Portal](#)

Publisher rights
Copyright 2016 Bulletin of Hispanic Studies.

General rights
Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Queen's University Belfast Research Portal is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy
The Research Portal is Queen's institutional repository that provides access to Queen's research output. Every effort has been made to ensure that content in the Research Portal does not infringe any person's rights, or applicable UK laws. If you discover content in the Research Portal that you believe breaches copyright or violates any law, please contact openaccess@qub.ac.uk.

Bulletin of Hispanic Studies

The Violence of History: Rosa Chacel's *Memorias de Leticia Valle*

Journal:	<i>Bulletin of Hispanic Studies</i>
Manuscript ID:	11-14-BHS-0737.R2
Manuscript Type:	Original Article
Keywords:	Rosa Chacel, <i>Memorias de Leticia Valle</i> , History and historiography, Francoism, Spanish Civil War
Abstract:	<p>Leticia Valle, the eleven-year-old narrator and protagonist of Rosa Chacel's 1945 novel, <i>Memorias de Leticia Valle</i>, seduces and destroys her history teacher, Daniel. Here, I argue that Daniel represents traditionalist, right-wing interpretations of Spanish history while also recalling the importance of the colonial wars in Morocco in the build up to the Civil War, and the Nationalist's use of Moroccan conscripts and recruits within the peninsula. Written at a time when History was being used to justify an armed rebellion, a civil war, and the imposition of a brutal dictatorship, Chacel's novel depends on ellipses and absence to question historiographical principles. Furthermore, it combines continued reference to Spanish history with the use of violent and militant language. The most devastating conflict of all is between Leticia and Daniel: she silences and dehumanizes him, though she is not able to fully explain what happened. Writing from Switzerland, Chacel's eleven-year-old narrator stakes a claim Spanish history for her own at a time when dissent within Spain was being silenced by Francoist Regime.</p> <p>Leticia Valle, la protagonista y narradora de la novela <i>Memorias de Leticia Valle</i> (1945) de Rosa Chacel tiene once años. Seduce y arruina a su profesor de historia, Daniel. La figura de Daniel representa una interpretación derechista y tradicionalista de la historia española. También trae a la memoria la importancia de Marruecos en los antecedentes a la Guerra Civil, y el uso por parte de los Nacionales de reclutas marroquíes dentro de la península. La novela fue escrita en un tiempo en el que la Historia era usada con el fin de justificar una rebelión armada, una guerra civil y la imposición de una dictadura. Está construida en torno a elipses y ausencias con el objetivo de cuestionar principios historiográficos. Es más, combina el uso continuado de referencias a la historia española con el uso de un lenguaje violento y militante. El conflicto más abrumador es el que sostienen Daniel y Leticia. Ella le condena al silencio y le deshumaniza, aunque ella misma no sea capaz de explicar del todo lo que ha pasado. Escribiendo desde Suiza, la joven narradora reclama la historia española para sí misma cuando la disidencia dentro de España estaba siendo silenciada.</p>

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

SCHOLARONE™
Manuscripts

For Peer Review

The Violence of History: Rosa Chacel's *Memorias de Leticia Valle*

Geraldine Lawless (Queen's University Belfast)

Published in its final form in Buenos Aires in 1945 (ten years before Nabokov's *Lolita*, six years after the end of the Spanish Civil War) when Rosa Chacel was in living in exile, the novel *Memorias de Leticia Valle* is a first-person retrospective narrative from an eleven-year old girl who may have seduced her teacher Don Daniel, the archivist at Simancas. It is a difficult novel to read, not just because of its subject matter, but because of its elusive and elliptical style; the climax and focal of the novel is represented by a blank space on the page.

Chacel's novels and stories are celebrated for their challenging prose, but rarely interpreted as contemporary responses to events as they played out on the world-historical stage. *Memorias de Leticia Valle* has often been read as a response to the author's relationship with José Ortega y Gasset, her one-time mentor and the doyen of Spanish philosophy in the 1920s and 30s (Rodríguez 1989; Requena Hidalgo 2007; Johnson 1996: 60; Mangini 2001: 151; Scarlett 1994: 84, 92; Maier 1992; López Sáenz 1994).¹ An exile, a woman, and stigmatized by her association with Ortega, Chacel's work was unpopular both inside Francoist Spain and among Republican exiles; it was dismissed as "dehumanized" literature of little relevance to the postwar social realist movement' (Mangini 1993: 138; see also Mangini 1987: 18).² While the sexism that characterized Spain in the 1930s was carried into exile by Chacel's male counterparts (Zubiaurre 2002: 273-280; see also Mora 1987), matters were further compounded by Chacel's vocal opposition to feminism and her 'utopian and oversimplified vision of the status of women' (Pattison 1993: 9-11; see also Mangini 1987: 18; Fernández-Klohe 2005: 24-25). In 1980, just as a new generation of Spanish authors and literary critics were taking an interest in her writing, Soldevila Durante could still claim: 'Es rarísimo, excepcional, en Rosa Chacel la transcripción en literatura de una cuestión contemporánea' (Soldevila

¹ For Murphy, 'the novel constitutes a response from Chacel's exile in Paris and Buenos Aires to the essentialist views prevalent in Spanish cultural and intellectual circles in the decades before the Civil War' (Murphy 2010a: 51; see also Mora 1987; Scarlett 1994: 82-85).

² This view is shared by a number of scholars, including Egido Martínez (1981: 120n), Fernández-Klohe (2005: 13-19) and Arkinstall (2011: 141-42).

Durante 1980: 43; see also Marra Lopez 1963: 146-47).³ Tellingly, he omitted her name from the onomastic index in *La novela desde 1936*. Of course, not everyone shares this view and a handful of critics have reminded readers of the undeniable chronological links between *Memorias de Leticia Valle* and the Spanish Civil War: ‘Begun in the midst of the Civil War [...] and published in 1945, *Memorias de Leticia Valle* can be classified as one of the first works of Spanish postwar fiction’ (Scarlett 1994: 80; see also Davies 1998: 159).

In this article, I will consider *Memorias de Leticia Valle* with the Civil War very much in mind. I will pay particular attention to what it says about how history is written and whose history is written. I will argue that it challenges Francoism’s appropriation of History by dramatically silencing the representatives of a conservative, traditionalist, and ultra-Catholic interpretation of Spanish history. Making this case involves examining the multiple interrogations of history, historiography, authority, power and gender that inform the novel’s premise, structure, and plot. It is important to emphasize the calculated use of violence in the contest between Leticia and her history teacher, Daniel, and indeed, the violence that runs through the novel as a whole. What is at stake in all of this becomes clear when Daniel is read as a symbol of Nationalist historiography, the Rebels’ use of Moroccan soldiers during the war, the reputation for brutality that these soldiers gained, and Francoism’s simultaneous deployment of first, an ultra-Catholic idea of Spain based on direct descent from the Reconquista and second, a shared Moroccan-Spanish cultural history. *Memorias de Leticia Valle* systematically engages, not just with meta-historiographical debates, but also with specific interpretations of Spanish history. Chacel’s narrator claimed Spanish history for her own at a time when dissent within Spain was being silenced by the Francoist regime.

Eleven-year-old Leticia Valle is the daughter of a colonel whose relationship with his wife led him to Morocco in an attempt to ‘hacerse matar por

³ In something of a counterpoint to this, there has been considerable discussion of how some details of *Memorias de Leticia Valle* echo Chacel’s autobiographical work. In *Desde el amanecer*, she says: ‘El breve recuerdo de este colegio [the Carmelite school in Valladolid] lo esbocé, cuarenta años más tarde, en las *Memorias de Leticia Valle*, apócrifas, de hecho’ (Chacel 2004: 71; see also Rodríguez-Fischer 2000: 47). Unsurprisingly therefore, critics have frequently focused on questions of autobiography and memoir in *Leticia Valle* and in Chacel’s work as a whole. See, for example, Maier (1992), Requena Hidalgo (2002 and 2007), Johnson (1996: 62), Glenn (1991), Egido Martínez (1981), Marra López (1963: 144).

los moros' (Chacel 2010: 88). He returns an alcoholic and moves Leticia and her aunt Aurelia from busy Valladolid to Simancas, a small town best known for its important national archive. In Valladolid, Leticia had had a private tutor, Margarita Velayos, whom the Valle family describe as 'muy machuna' (Chacel 2010: 105). After the move to Simancas, at first she is left to her own devices and develops voracious appetites for food and sleep. Her education resumes when she starts private classes with the local schoolteacher and then joins the other village girls for needlework. The schoolteacher recommends Leticia take music lessons with Doña Luisa, who in turn recommends that Leticia be taught by her husband, Don Daniel the archivist. Leticia then divides her loyalties between Luisa, from whom she learns to sing, cook, and eat, and Daniel, who has something (knowledge or power, perhaps) that Leticia desires. Communication between Daniel and Leticia becomes increasingly belligerent. When the final climax arrives, it happens behind closed doors; words fail and the page goes momentarily blank. Afterwards, Leticia returns to class with Daniel. They are interrupted by her father who demands the archivist be brought to account, though he fails to say for what exactly. Or rather, Leticia will not or cannot report the dialogue in full and resorts to an ellipsis: 'no tengo más que pedir su destitución por...' (Chacel 2010: 270). Daniel obliquely reassures him that Leticia's virginity remains intact: 'Hay una palabra que no quiero ni pronunciar; pero en fin, si digo el porvenir moral, quiero decir el futuro desenvolvimiento... Sobre ese punto yo sé muy bien que no hay nada que temer' (Chacel 2010: 272). Later, from the silence of her home, Leticia hears a distant bang, usually taken to mean that Daniel has shot himself. She concludes her memoir the day before her twelfth birthday from a desk in Switzerland where she is living with her cousin Adriana, her uncle Alberto, and his wife Frida. The novel had opened five months earlier when Leticia first decided to use writing to hold on to her memories, her 'cosas': 'las escribiré para que no se borren jamás en mi memoria' (Chacel 2010: 84). By the end, therefore, the reader has been brought full circle and a little bit more.

Critics disagree about the novel on a number of counts: who seduces whom (Scarlett 1994: 85, 92); whether the seduction is sexual (Pérez-Magallón 2003: 150; Grau-Llevería 1998: 204; Pattison 1993: 128); Leticia's awareness of

her own sexuality (Murphy 2010a; Murphy 2010: 59-62); her agency and autonomy (Faszer-McMahon 2006; Mangini 1998: 131); if the novel is a memoir or a confession (Requena Hidalgo 2007; Scarlett 1994); if a confession, whether Leticia feels remorse (Pérez-Magallón 2003: 152; Pattison 1993: 116-17), and of course, the central event: what happens in the space between paragraphs (Rosales 2000: 230; Faszer-McMahon 2006: 52; Murphy 2010a: 148). The novel has been subjected to psychoanalytical readings (Benson 1998; Murphy 2010a; Pérez-Magallón 2003) and used to validate Chacel's central place within modernism and the Spanish *vanguardia* (Kirkpatrick 2003; Murphy 2010; Murphy 2010a). Pérez-Magallón has even challenged the critical consensus about Daniel's suicide by suggesting that this depends as much on comments made elsewhere by Chacel as on the words in the novel (Pérez-Magallón 2003: 153).⁴ Interviewing Chacel, Porlán made this comment: 'Cuando el archivero se levanta la tapa de los sesos produce una elipsis tan brutal que la mayor parte de los lectores no se enteran de ello' (Porlán 1984: 77). Chacel agreed.

The novel's frame structures it as Leticia's attempt to articulate an identity in a world where silences and indecipherable codes prevail. Ultimately, she is unable to describe what happens to her behind those closed doors; the blank on the page is indisputable. Tensions between voice and silence are emphasized from page one: 'Cuando quiero decirme a mí misma algo de todo lo que sucedió, solo se me ocurre la frase de mi padre: «¡Es inaudito, es inaudito!»' (Chacel 2010: 83).⁵ Ambiguity and ellipsis are central throughout. This, and the

⁴ Chacel claimed that the work was inspired by a Dostoevsky story and a news item from the local papers: "Timo y su amigo Joaquín Valverde (...) estaban leyendo las *Memorias de un pecador*, de Dostoevsky. [...] empezaron a contarme el argumento [...] Lo encontré maravilloso, tremendo... Un hombre seduce a una niña de trece años y ésta se cuelga... Entonces yo les dije: «Bueno, bueno, yo escribiré un día una novela en la que sea una niña de trece años la que seduzca a un señor y sea éste quien se tenga que colgar». [...] muchos años antes me había impresionado una historia que había ocurrido en un pueblo de Valladolid, en que efectivamente fue un señor el que se tuvo que colgar. Eso unido a la formulación de Dostoevsky me inspiró la novela." The quotation is provided in Rodríguez-Fischer (2000: 45). See also Delgado (1975: 4).

⁵ Critics have disagreed about whether or not Leticia is successful in her attempts to articulate an individual identity. As it is a first-person narrative, Davies reminds us, the reader 'sees meaning where Leticia, perhaps, does not' (Davies 1998: 159-60), indicating a loss of narrative control. Indeed, Pérez-Magallón argues that ambiguity joins forces with unreliable memory and ambivalent gender identity to prevent Leticia from articulating a functioning, self-contained identity (Pérez-Magallón 2003). For Grau-Lleveria, in contrast, the novel incorporates an overview of female 'types' of the period—the *marimacho*, the local schoolteacher, the spinster aunt—in order that Leticia can reject them and create her own individual identity: 'Ella crea su historia. Escribe para que no la escriban los demás. Para que no la confundan con una opción

fact that the text is billed as a memoir, a private, personal and partial record of an individual's life, prompts comparisons between history and memoir, the subjective and the objective, the private and the public, the personal and the political, and the masculine and feminine domains. Comparisons of this nature are always in some sense about power, about who gets to write history and who is silenced.

Specifically Spanish historical referents are woven through Leticia's story. Daniel's first lesson with Leticia starts with Ataúlfo, king of the Visigoths. Leticia calls Daniel a 'rey moro' (Chacel 2010: 120) evoking the Moorish invasion of 711 and the period of Islamic rule that followed. A statue of Columbus on the 'paseo de los jardines de Valladolid' (Chacel 2010: 216) is mentioned. There are references to the crusades (Chacel 2010: 132) and to the Inquisition (Chacel 2010: 263). Alfonso XIII makes more than one appearance (Chacel 2010: 174, 228). Most importantly of all, however, the novel is set in Simancas where, in the sixteenth century, the Hapsburgs first housed the Archivo Real de la Corona del Castilla and where Daniel is archivist. Between publication of the opening pages in the Argentine magazine *Sur* in 1939 and the final publication of the complete novel in 1945, Chacel changed the setting from Sardón de Duero to Simancas (Morán Rodríguez 2010: 51; Chacel 2010: *passim*; Chacel 1939: 27). Maier claims that the 'importance of the change and the role of Simancas cannot be exaggerated, because of the role played by the village and its archive in Spanish history and culture' (Maier 1994: 170-71).⁶

Leticia's persistently tries to understand, challenge and ultimately control the rules for writing history. Recalling the way her imagination mixed stories taken from history with the buildings and streets she visited on her trips to the pharmacy in Valladolid, she writes: 'No sé si a todas estas cosas que yo imaginaba [...] se les puede llamar la Historia' (Chacel 2010: 93). Leticia and her

femenina que ella no ha elegido' (Grau-Lleveria 1998: 207). Faszter-McMahon argues that Chacel's use of a child narrator simultaneously invokes and repudiates contemporary attitudes that described women, like children, as culturally underdeveloped (Faszter-McMahon 2006: 28). Drawing an even more positive message from the novel, Johnson claims that 'Leticia [...] is a self that acts, that effects change in social values and resituates itself vis-à-vis society' (Johnson 2003: 219).

⁶ As Dávila Gonçalves says, 'con su documentación acerca de las llamadas colonias indias, es el segundo más importante de España después del Archivo de las Indias en Sevilla' (Dávila Gonçalves 1999: 42).

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

first-person memoir repeatedly emphasize the importance of imagination, creativity and physical sensation in writing history (Grau-Llevería 1998; see also Johnson 2003: 216). Verging on mystical, Leticia’s historical imagination produces a physical reaction. She explicitly rejects formal historical record in favour of something more vital and creative. Daniel, on the other hand, is the archivist and spokesman for official History. On a tour of the castle where the Archivo General de Simancas is housed, Leticia’s imaginative and creative plans are thwarted by the presence of her uncle Alberto and his wife Frida, her aunt Aurelia and Daniel himself:

si hubiera podido concentrarme y quedarme quieta un rato en aquellos banquitos laterales que tenían las ventanas, habría llegado a comprenderlo todo, a ver todo tal cual había sido en otro tiempo, pero no nos dejaban tranquilas ni un momento. Había que seguir, había que pasar a otra y otra sala, donde estaban las cartas de santos y de reyes. (Chacel 2010: 189)

On this occasion the children, Leticia and her cousin Adriana, are obliged to do as they are told. Leticia must constrain her imaginative interpretation of the past, forego the pleasure of discovering history for herself and allow the official version to dictate how she behaves. However, Leticia does not passively accept what she is told. Nor does she abandon her ambition of telling her own story.

One part of her attempt to rewrite history centres on activities traditionally associated with women. By acquiring skills and knowledge from the local schoolteacher in Simancas and from Doña Luisa, Leticia establishes an alternative set of aesthetic and historiographical criteria. Funded by charitable contributions from the upper-class ladies of Simancas and the surrounding area (Chacel 2010: 209), the level of education of the ‘maestra del pueblo’ (Chacel 2010: 105) cannot be compared to Daniel’s. Nevertheless, it allows her financial independence as an unmarried woman. In one sense, this financial independence is celebrated publicly by the whole town when her twenty-fifth anniversary is marked. As I will show later, this is also the scene for one of Leticia’s triumphs

over Daniel the archivist. In a novel set around 1909 in a country where women were first granted the vote in 1931, this should not go unremarked.

Although Newberry argues that needlework in the novel 'is most firmly relegated to an inferior sphere of activity' (Newberry 1994: 76), in fact Leticia revises her opinion more than once. She is repulsed by her aunts' work in her grandmother's house in Valladolid where she was stifled by the palpable sense of oppression, dishonesty and enforced convention: 'en aquel odioso gabinete donde se hablaba de cosas nunca claras y siempre mal intencionadas, los bastidores y cestillos me parecían embelecados estúpidos' (Chacel 2010: 107-108). Once she discovers that the schoolteacher in Simancas is extraordinarily skilled, she changes her mind (Chacel 2010: 106-108). To begin with, Leticia's lessons with the *maestra* are excruciating for them both. In Leticia's opinion, the *maestra* does not want her ignorance to be exposed, so she gives dictation. This does not suit the young prodigy at all: 'resultaba que mi letra era ininteligible y mi ortografía absurda' (Chacel 2010: 106). However, when Leticia catches sight of the teacher's needlework, she is full of admiration: 'Cuando descubrí que la maestra era capaz de hacer aquellos primores ya tuve de qué hablar con ella' (Chacel 2010: 107). Later, the *maestra* reciprocates by recognising Leticia's capacity for storytelling (Chacel 2010: 111). Mutual respect and recognition replace embarrassed silences and illegible writing. When Leticia says 'pudimos entendernos ocupando cada una nuestra posición verdadera' (Chacel 2010: 106), in a literal sense she means that the teacher-pupil relationship has been restored. However, the phrase also implies that each will do the task that she as an individual performs best with the tools at her disposal, the *maestra* using her needle and Leticia using words.⁷

Despite this apparent vindication of activities traditionally carried out by women, Chacel scorned the feminist tag; 'La literatura femenina es una estupidez', she famously said (quoted in Aguirre 1983: 5; see also Morán Rodríguez 2010: 48-49). Arguments developed by Chacel in an essay published

⁷ Kirkpatrick has linked passages from Chacel's autobiographical novel *Barrio de Maravillas* to the publication in 1933 of Carmen Baroja's *El encaje en España*: 'este tributo a la aguja es en cierto sentido análogo al estudio del encaje por parte de Baroja: un reconocimiento de que la aguja, símbolo del encierro doméstico de la mujer española, ha sido también un instrumento de la creatividad femenina' (Kirkpatrick 2003: 61).

in 1931 in the *Revista de Occidente*, ‘Esquema de los problemas prácticos y actuales del amor’, can perhaps help us to understand her apparently contradictory attitude:

toda aportación cultural ha sido realizada por algún individuo con aquella su individualidad, enteramente irrealizable para el resto de los hombres, de modo que puede decirse que la razón de ser de cada uno es realizarse, logrando simplemente con esto algo que hasta tanto nadie había realizado; en materia de espíritu no podemos admitir, en verdad, más que la individualidad irreductible de cada ser. (Chacel 1993: 453)

Being female is only one of the many factors that make up an individual; to fulfil oneself as a woman can only ever mean to fulfil oneself as a unique individual with unique talents and skills, likes and dislikes. Chacel’s arguments coincide roughly with what Toril Moi says in a much later essay ‘What Is a Woman?’:

All forms of sexual reductionism implicitly deny that a woman is a concrete, embodied human being (of a certain age, nationality, race, class, and with a wholly unique store of experiences) and not just a human being sexed in a particular way. (Moi 1999: 35-36)

The fact that Leticia enjoys needlework with the schoolteacher and despises it with her aunts, or that the *maestra* excels at it while Leticia has a talent for telling stories, is entirely in keeping with Chacel’s rejection of feminism: in her understanding of the term, feminism reduced women to biology and erased the unique circumstances of each individual.

Chacel’s novel brings women into history as participants, chroniclers and analysts. Nevertheless, it would be disingenuous to claim that she bases a straightforward female-oriented historical lineage around needlework. Newberry may be right after all: the novel’s implicit praise for the schoolteacher’s talents is conditional, qualified. Embroidery and lacework will do very well for the *maestra* but needle and thread are not enough for Leticia who has other ambitions: ‘me pasé los meses extasiado con aquello: es increíble, pero

es así' (Chacel 2010: 108). This change of heart is bound up with a broader rejection of conventional femininity: 'decidí dejarlo por ir apartándome de aquellas ocupaciones de mujer' (Chacel 2010: 137). Scarlett's reading of Chacel's work is apt: 'Chacel's formation in a largely prefeminist era in Spain shows up in a certain revulsion towards women as a group and the trappings of femininity, even though she empowers the individual female subject' (Scarlett 1994: 80). Not content to substitute needlework for history, even symbolically, Leticia abandons it for the loftier call of History with Daniel. Once she becomes Daniel's pupil, though, she sets about beating him at his own game.

What is most unsettling about Daniel and Leticia's relationship is not only how violent it is, but how much of the violence comes from Leticia herself.⁸ Although the first line of the novel tells us that she is eleven, about to turn twelve, readers must constantly remind themselves of this fact. Yet she and Daniel fight to the death, particularly if we accept that Daniel is forced to commit suicide by the eleven-year old pre-pubescent child. As noted above, Pérez-Magallón (2003: 153) has challenged this reading, and he is right to claim that the single sentence describing Daniel's ultimate demise is not at all conclusive:

Y me pareció que en medio de su quietud estallaba algo como una pompa. Fue un pequeño estampido, lejano y tan breve, que se preguntaba uno si podía tener realidad una cosa tan sin tiempo. (Chacel 2010: 273-74)

Nevertheless, there are other elements that point to suicide. Colonel Valle threatens Daniel: 'le voy a ver a usted salir de aquí con todo el coraje: con el deshonor, con el escándalo, con un golpe bien asestado, de esos que le parten a uno por el eje para todo el resto de su vida' (Chacel 2010: 269-70). Daniel responds by saying that 'puede haber algo que lo haga imposible' and 'Cuando salga usted por esta puerta, un poco de tiempo después lo comprenderá' (Chacel 2010: 271, 272). Shortly after the 'pequeño estampido', Leticia overhears her aunt crying when someone comes to the door with news (Chacel 2010: 274-75).

⁸ Critics have noted that Leticia is fully aware of the incipient violence from an early stage: 'Leticia intuye, desde antes de su primera lección, el carácter competitivo y la tensión emocional que van a entrañar su relación académica con don Daniel. Ambos se embarcan en una batalla casi sin cuartel [...] El arma de don Daniel es su erudición' (Rosales 2000: 227; see also Murphy 2010a).

Daniel's suicide would account for these details. Yet even if Daniel does not kill himself, Leticia still destroys him by silencing and dehumanizing him. This is particularly apparent at two key points: first, during the celebration to mark the *maestra's* anniversary and second, during one of their last conversations.

At the celebration, Leticia recites 'La carrera', a lengthy excerpt about a Moorish king's flight to paradise on a horse from Zorrilla's multi-volume narrative poem *Granada: poema oriental*. When Leticia first saw Daniel she called him a 'rey moro' (Chacel 2010: 120) and the poem is addressed to him. As she walks to take her place on stage, she sees a portrait of Alfonso XIII. This reference takes the reader back to an earlier point in the novel when she describes for Daniel the conversations she had with an organ grinder in Valladolid who looked like Alfonso XIII (Chacel 2010: 174). Although she carefully omits any innuendo, any hint of sex or seduction, Daniel grabs her head in his hands, calls her a traitor, and hurls her out of his office (Chacel 2010: 175). Later, on her way to the stage to recite 'La carrera', Leticia passes Alfonso's portrait and remembers what the organ grinder had said to her, the words that she had left out of the version she told Daniel: 'Me pareció oír la frase inolvidable: «Lo que tú quieras, salada»' (Chacel 2010: 228).⁹ It may be that Leticia's command over the organ grinder act as a sort of rehearsal for her manipulation of Daniel and her attack during the recital; the image of the king reassures her that she will triumph: 'sentí que me concedía de antemano el triunfo, que todo sería lo que yo quisiera' (Chacel 2010: 228). Were she to have told Daniel about their salacious exchange, 'él sabría de lo que soy capaz y tendría una pista' (Chacel 2010: 176). What exactly, though, is Leticia capable of? During the recital, in one of the most powerful images in the novel, she stretches out her hand:

extendí el brazo hacia un determinado lugar [...]. Señalé a un sitio en la primera fila de espectadores, con la mano abierta, como si tocase algo con la punta de los dedos, como si recorriese un velo que descubriese el

⁹ A biographical note could be added here: in an interview with Alberto Porlán, Chacel explained that Alfonso XIII was personally responsible for changing a regulation that would have forbidden Chacel's husband from travelling to Italy on a scholarship and prevented Chacel from travelling with him (Porlán 1984: 19).

misterio. Y desde allí, desde la tribuna misma, sentí latir su corazón.
(Chacel 2010: 231)

An eleven-year old girl in a white communion dress, sleeves rolled up and arms bared, reaches out from the 'tribuna' to take Daniel's beating heart in her open hand. She gloats that she has deliberately contrived a situation that renders him immobile, speechless, and powerless and provides her with an opportunity for revenge:

Pero yo no quería sólo atormentarle [...] Lo que puedo asegurar es que él sufría en aquel momento una verdadera tortura y que en mis planes había figurado desde un principio la posibilidad de lograrlo.

Ya en otra ocasión he hablado a propósito de esto, de venganza.
[...] era yo quien le enseñaba la imagen desde la tribuna, con toda mi osadía, porque él no podía hacerme callar ni obligarme a cambiar de tema. (Chacel 2010: 231)

There is even more to this recital. In Dávila Gonçalves's reading, 'La carrera' depicts the sexual penetration of a virgin (Dávila Gonçalves 1999: 46-50). Davies likewise interprets the recital as a substitute for the bed scene in Leticia's seduction of Daniel (Davies 1998: 161). Even leaving aside the fact that she is eleven years old, Leticia's white communion dress is suggestive of virginity and it seems, therefore, as if Daniel is the one who is taking advantage of Leticia. However, in her description of events—and the novel is the last word on the matter after all—she repeatedly claims that Daniel is forced into a position of passivity and silence while she belligerently takes command: 'Mi voz, en aquel momento, habría sido envidiada por todos los generales que han mandado batallas. Y tuvo que callarse' (Chacel 2010: 237). Assuming that silence cannot be taken for consent, Daniel's pupil, his supposed victim, is the very same child that silences him and, figuratively speaking at least, rapes him. This act is witnessed by a town that has gathered together, along with Daniel's wife Luisa and Leticia's former tutor, Margarita Velayos, to celebrate twenty-five years of work of an anonymous female schoolteacher. Leticia, it would seem, is capable of quite a lot.

Describing her last conversation with Daniel before the page goes blank, before Leticia’s father threatens him, before his suicide and before her move to Switzerland, Leticia intensifies her use of the language of war: ‘Ya empezó el fuego’; ‘el tiroteo’; ‘Logré desarmarle’; ‘no me di por vencida’ (Chacel 2010: 264). After these bombardments, Daniel leaves the room abruptly, stripped of his humanity and unable to speak:

al marcharse [...] [e]n su garganta o en su boca se produjo un sonido chirriante, tan inhumano como el crujido de un armario. Uno de esos ruidos que causan terror, precisamente porque no sabemos si es o no es un alma quien los produce’ (Chacel 2010: 265).

He returns shortly, finds Leticia crying and threatens to kill her, though at first he is, once again, unable to speak:

Entró y cerró la puerta detrás de sí; parecía que no podría hablar, porque tenía los labios entreabiertos, pero los dientes apretados unos contra otros; sin embargo, dijo:
—¡Te voy a matar, te voy a matar! (Chacel 2010: 266)

After this, the page goes blank. If this is the event that determines the entire novel, surely in some sense Leticia has won, despite this blank page? Even if she cannot explain exactly what happened, at the very least the eleven-year old girl has silenced the archivist, and she lives to tell the tale. Given the age and sex of the two characters, their teacher-pupil relationship, the obvious question seems to be about what Daniel has done to Leticia. However, if we take her at her word, we might well ask what Leticia has done to Daniel.

The struggle between Daniel and Leticia is about who has the last say. This involves something more specific than dismantling the overlapping and interdependent binaries of speaker/spoken, masculine/feminine, history/memoir, objective/subjective. Herzberger has made a convincing case for reading the social realist novels of the 1950s as challenges to Francoist historiography based in part on absence: ‘rather than draw its referent from

history (the so-called facts of the matter), fiction reaches into time through the *discourse* of history (historiography) in order to subvert the narrative principles upon which the telling of that history is premised' (Herzberger 1995: 3).

Memorias de Leticia Valle was written between 1937 and 1945, the years of the Civil War and the establishment of the Franco Regime. Chacel had left Spain in 1937, first for Paris, then Río de Janeiro, and then Buenos Aires in 1942 (Requena Hidalgo 2002: 8-9). A number of critics (Scarlett 1994; Murphy 2010a and 2010; Mayock 2004) have found that silence and absence link *Memorias de Leticia Valle* to the Civil War.¹⁰ This body of scholarship implies that *Memorias de Leticia Valle* should be listed alongside Cela's *La familia de Pascual Duarte* (1942) and Laforet's *Nada* (1945); according to Thomas, Cela's and Laforet's novels were 'the first in a series of pessimistic descriptions of human society in which violence was never far below the surface, and often erupted' (Thomas 1990: 130-31). (Thomas does not mention Chacel.) Yet despite the many reminders of the novel's publication date, critics have been surprisingly hesitant in establishing detailed connections that would bring the novel into focus as a response to the Civil War. The point is that whereas it has been standard practice to interpret oblique allusion and simmering violence in *La familia de Pascual Duarte* and *Nada* as closely bound up with the Spanish Civil War, for whatever reason this has not been the case for *Memorias de Leticia Valle*.¹¹

Scenes of violence are not limited to Leticia's clash with Daniel, however, and it is worth emphasizing that this is a characteristic of the novel as a whole

¹⁰ Scarlett says 'we can [...] find traces of the Civil War itself in the figure of the missing body, in the conversion of seduction into warfare as the only use of force available to the young Leticia, and in the opposing impulse of a patriarchy that leads to its own destruction' (Scarlett 1994: 91-92). For Murphy 'the silence at the heart of the novel [*Memorias de Leticia Valle*] echoes the silence which forms a pervasive element of post-Civil War Spanish fiction' even if it 'is not overtly rooted in a political milieu' (Murphy 2010a: 66; see also Murphy 2010: 169). For Mayock, Leticia's father's 'diegetic disillusionment reflects the extradiegetic mass frustration of the novel's post-Civil War time of publication' while the novel's representation of dysfunctional societies serves as a metaphor for a broken society (Mayock 2004: 47).

¹¹ Dávila Gonçalves and others have noted similarities between *Memorias de Leticia Valle*, *Nada* and other 'novela[s] de formación femenina' of the postwar years (Dávila Gonçalves 1999: 31; see also Glenn 1991: 287; Johnson 2003: 223; Ferrús Antón 2006: 379; Murphy 2010: 66; Scarlett 1994: 80). Dávila Gonçalves's article is a notable exception in many ways. She relates the ellipses and oppressive silences of Leticia's family's in Valladolid to the censorship imposed by the new state in the 1940s as well as its anti-modernizing rhetoric and practice. Leticia's first-person narrative—a child with an adult voice—turns her into an anachronism analogous to the Francoist attempt to return to the past instead of adjusting to modern times (Dávila Gonçalves 1999: 38).

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

before moving on to probe more deeply into what Leticia’s treatment of Daniel might mean. Before the move to Simancas, Leticia is whiling away her time in Valladolid, using her imagination to bring the dry stuff of history books to life, looking at the light falling on a small plaza between the streets Obispo and Sierpe.

el sol era terrible, era irritante, trágico. Yo pensaba entonces en los gladiadores que morían en el circo de Roma. Veía sobre todo aquellos que caían al pisar la red, veía los cuerpos arrastrados por la arena, y también algo leído no sé dónde: dos que morían a un tiempo, atravesándose mutuamente con sus espadas. Bajo aquel sol, bajo aquella luz desgarradora, veía siempre aquella escena: dos hombres desnudos que se mataban uno a otro al mismo tiempo. (Chacel 2010: 91)

Under the light of the hot and tragic summer sun, she sees two Roman gladiators fight to the death against a background of corpses. She inscribes the image onto the amphitheatre of history. In a novel by a Spanish exile published between 1939 and 1945, the mutual destruction of the gladiators in the arena must surely bring to mind civil war.

Another undercurrent of violence links a sequence of events to the river that runs through Simancas. Waiting on the bridge for Daniel and Luisa to return from the hospital, Leticia watches leaves float by underneath. She is frozen in fascinated suspense, waiting for something to happen and imagining untold horrors taking place upstream from her, moving towards her.

no sé por qué su frecuencia me impacientaba, como si en cada una de ellas esperase ver llegar algo que no llegaba. [...] Otra más, otra más y lejos, allá en el fondo del valle de donde venían, sabe Dios qué: la sospecha de alguna escena horrorosa, con gritos, con gestos desesperados. (Chacel 2010: 245-46)

In an earlier scene, Leticia sees a young girl drop puppies from the bridge and watches them as they struggle and drown in the water. She is horrified.

Significantly, it is just not the fact of the puppies drowning that distresses her, but the source of the violence: '¡que una muchacha joven pudiera hacerlo!' (Chacel 2010: 166). She runs to Luisa and Daniel's house where she and Daniel exchange looks:

Era como si él estuviese viendo dentro de mis ojos el horror de lo que yo había visto. Parecía que él también estaba mirando algo monstruoso, algo que le inspirase un terror fuera de lo natural y, sin embargo, sonreía.
(Chacel 2010: 166)

In this sequence, Leticia witnesses the death of the puppies, is horrified by the fact that young girls are capable of violent acts, displays this horror as she looks at Daniel and sees it reflected back at her, herself a young girl. It may be that Daniel is afraid of what she will do to him, and she is afraid of what she will do to Daniel. Or, as this is a retrospective narrative, she is horrified by what she has already done: she has dehumanized and silenced her history teacher and forced him to commit suicide. Her dread of what the river is bringing with it as it moves inexorably downstream hints at her own future culpability; everyone will be caught up in the terror and violence, not only as victims, but as perpetrators too.

In short, *Memorias de Leticia Valle* is a violent novel, or at least a novel about violence. Another oblique allusion to the Civil War refers to the symbolic importance of Madrid as a site of resistance. When Leticia's aunt Frida and her cousin Adriana visit from Switzerland, they present her with a vest embroidered with flowers and a small wooden bear:

Mi tía había bordado aquellas florecillas de colores, Adriana había escogido en la estación el osito, pero ¿quién les había dado el modelo del cuadro que componía todo aquello? ¿Comprendían ellas que yo sabía toda la historia o acaso la sabía yo sola y ellas no? (Chacel 2010: 182)

The bear is the symbol of the city where Adriana was born, possibly Berne in Switzerland; it is also the symbol of Madrid and appears on that city's coat of arms along with a strawberry tree. In the passage quoted above, the bear and the

‘florecillas de colores’ form a ‘cuadro’ resembling Madrid’s coat of arms. Until its fall in March 1939, Madrid was a symbol of Republican resistance and refusal to surrender and the popular Republican song, ‘No pasarán’ epitomised this:

Los moros que trajo Franco
en Madrid quieren entrar.
Mientras queden milicianos
los moros no pasarán. (Madariaga 2006: 257)

The title of Madariaga’s book on the history of Moroccan recruits in the Spanish Civil War, *Los moros que trajo Franco*, comes from the song ‘No pasarán’. As noted earlier, Leticia calls Daniel a ‘rey moro’ and it is worth thinking further about what this epithet can mean when the persistent presence of violence throughout the novel is read against the backdrop of the Civil War. On July 17th 1936, the rebellion began in the garrisons of Morocco where it was generally supported by Spaniards and Moroccans alike (Balfour 2002: 268-70). Shortly after, in an operation that effectively eliminated the possibility of a quick victory for the loyalists, troops were airlifted from there to the peninsula by Italian and German planes (Preston 2006: 119). Moroccan troops had been used in the brutal repression of the 1934 miners’ revolt in Asturias (Madariaga 2006: 11; Preston 2006: 79). Their reappearance in the peninsula in 1936 stirred up these recent memories and also older ones of colonial campaigns in Morocco where Spanish conscripts had been slaughtered. In 1909, around the time *Memorias de Leticia Valle* is set, conscription for these colonial wars sparked a general strike that precipitated the so-called ‘Semana Trágica’ (Preston 2006: 28-30). It was in these colonial wars that Leticia’s father hoped to ‘hacerse matar por los moros’ and to salvage his wounded honour. He failed in his mission and returned physically and emotionally damaged, with an amputated arm and a collection of grisly anecdotes (Chacel 2010: 100).¹²

¹² Maier (1992: 86-90) has noted a reference to Valle-Inclán in Leticia’s father’s amputation, their shared surname and in the semantic similarities between the title of Chacel’s novel and Valle-Inclán’s *Sonatas: memorias del marqués de Bradomín*. See also Johnson (2003: 212). In this respect, it is worth noting the parodic representation of historical narrative throughout the four *Sonatas*, an effect achieved at least in part by the use of an unreliable first-person narrator.

Madariaga estimates that between 60,000 and 70,000 Moroccans fought for the Nationalists during the Civil War (Madariaga 1992: 80). The tactics used to recruit them were dubious, to say the least, and they in turn gained a reputation for extreme acts of brutality. This was exploited by the Nationalists. Stories of atrocities committed by the Moroccan recruits made their way into loyalist Spain along with the refugees fleeing the Nationalist advance. There, they were added to memories of colonial warfare and even older traditions of Christian-Moorish antagonism.¹³ Boyd notes that 'whole villages would flee before the advancing colonial troops, fearing they would all be massacred' (Balfour 2002: 285).

During the Civil War, the Africanist officers who had led campaigns in Morocco would employ tactics learned there, this time against Spaniards, the new infidel; 'the most formative years of the younger generation of colonial officers like Franco had been spent in the war against Moroccans, and their sense of identity was moulded by it' (Balfour 2002: 315, 316). Francoist dealings with the Moroccan Protectorate involved more than armed conflict and terror tactics, however; they would lend the uprising a patina of cultural credibility through an appeal to history and tradition. Balfour notes that in October 1936, 'Moroccan representatives were flown over to join the celebrations in Seville of the Spanish "Day of the Race"' and that 'Mosques were opened in Seville and Cordoba' (Balfour 2002: 274). González González, in her study of Hispano-Moroccan cultural relations during the Civil War and the postwar period, shows how the idea of a shared history and culture was used even during the war to legitimize the emerging regime in international and domestic contexts. Thus, for example, the '*Instituto General Franco de Estudios e Investigación Hispano-Árabe* tiene su origen en 1938 en la Comisión Investigadora encargada de la catalogación de obras literarias y manuscritas existentes en la zona del Protectorado español'

¹³ 'The capture of towns and villages [in Spain] exhibited a similar pattern to military raids in the Rif: entry by fire and sword followed by sacking, destruction, rape and the massacre of the civil population. The atrocities committed by Moroccan troops on Spanish soil in no respect differed from those committed, with the complicity or even encouragement of many Spanish officers, in the villages and hamlets of the Rif. [...] Perfectly aware of the terror caused by the 'moros' among the Spanish soldiery, Franco used the Moroccan troops not only as cannon fodder but also as a psychological weapon against the Spanish people. It was a question of demoralizing Republican soldiers; the more numerous the misdeeds and savage acts committed by Moroccan troops, the less would be the courage of Spanish soldiers to face them' (Madariaga 1992: 87).

(González González 2007: 187-88). Such appeals to history were part of a broader trend among the Spanish Right, predating the Civil War, to view themselves in teleological terms as the agents of destiny, charged with the task of returning Spain to its former glory under a new regime purged of the moral sickness introduced by foreign forces in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by the enemies of Spain.

Boyd’s study, *Historia Patria: Politics, History, and National Identity in Spain, 1875-1975* (1997), shows the central importance of the history curriculum to debates about nationality.

[T]he heated controversy between left and right over the ends and content of education persisted throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Within that debate, the meaning of Spanish History, and its place within a national curriculum designed to forge a sense of national community, excited more interest than ever. Historians and educators [...] sought to help shape the nation’s future by offering radically conflicting interpretations of the nation’s past. It would take a much more determined and repressive state—the dictatorship of General Francisco Franco that emerged from the civil war in 1939—to silence the debate and impose a uniform vision of Spanish history on the nation. (Boyd 1997: 166)

National-Catholicism, the defining principle of Francoism, was consolidated, Boyd argues, during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship. Its ‘defining principle [...] was its claim that Spanish nationality had been definitively determined in the sixteenth-century fusion of the “Catholic ideal” with the “military monarchy.” Recourse to this historical ideal was a mode of legitimation, cultural definition and political socialization’ (Boyd 1997: 235). It is significant, therefore, that Daniel teaches Leticia history. For Johnson, he is ‘allied with archaic Spanish institutions’ (Johnson 2003: 222). Thus, Leticia’s train of thought after one lessons recalls the Inquisition, the early Crusades, the Reconquest and the ensuing obsession with *limpieza de sangre*:

Empecé a pensar en la primera Cruzada [...] y al decir: «La segunda mitad, formada de caballeros acaudillados por Godofredo de Bouillon»..., recordé que por la tarde, al pronunciar ese mismo nombre, mi profesor había cogido un lápiz que estaba sobre la carpeta. Lo hizo sin darse cuenta y se quedó con las manos sobre la mesa manejando aquel lápiz con las puntas de los dedos. Según hablaba, el lápiz aquel tomaba actitudes de lanza, de cruz, de pendón. (Chacel 2010: 132)

The 'actitudes de lanza, de cruz, de pendón', and later Daniel's 'mirada inquisitorial' (Chacel 2010: 263) remind readers of the historical association between Church and army, and of a tradition of using violence to enforce a particular interpretation of Spanish historical development. Daniel, by virtue of his position as archivist, is the guardian of this tradition: 'Don Daniel's role as custodian to one of the most important Spanish archives of materials related to the Spanish empire places him in an especially significant position as the keeper of the Spanish past and tradition' (Johnson 2003: 216). Further evidence for this interpretation appears when Daniel tells his sycophantic doctor friend that Menéndez Pelayo's *Historia de las ideas estéticas de España* was 'el panal donde yo enterré mis catorce años' (Chacel 2010: 196). As more than one historian has noted, Francoist historiography drew extensively on this ultra-Catholic patriarch of Spanish letters and on a group of conservative historians for whom he was key (Herzberger 19-25; Valls 2000; Boyd 1997: 225, 238). Through Menéndez Pelayo, Daniel is linked inextricably to the historiographical discourse of the Nationalists during the Civil War and into the postwar period.

The version of Spanish History that was espoused by National-Catholicism and used to justify the Civil War and the establishment of the new state was not without its contradictions, however. As Martin-Márquez notes:

It is now a critical commonplace that the Rebels represented the Civil War as a new Reconquest, but in reality the rhetoric of the Franco regime was much more complex, since [...] Spanish Christians had fought *alongside*

North African Muslims to overcome the Republicans, who were deemed the ‘foreign infidels’. (Martin-Márquez 2008: 220)¹⁴

Daniel’s role as ‘rey moro’ (Chacel 2010: 120) combined with his inquisitorial looks and his training as a disciple of Menéndez Pelayo, encapsulates the problematic nature of the Nationalists’ appeal to the rhetoric of Reconquest, Inquisition, and *limpieza de sangre* while they were simultaneously mobilizing Moroccan troops and proclaiming a shared Hispano-Moroccan culture.

Interpreting the novel to mean that Leticia defeats the representative of Nationalist historiography and of Moroccan soldiers in the Civil War is to read it as a counterfactual novel: whatever Leticia may or may not do to Daniel, the Nationalists won the war and their version of history was imposed throughout Spain. However, it contains one further challenge to the Francoist state: it is written by an exile. In a sense, it is written by two exiles; in 1939 Chacel was unable to return to Spain and spent the months leading up to World War II in Switzerland with her husband and son (Morán Rodríguez 2010: 33); Leticia is writing from her aunt’s house in Switzerland.¹⁵ The choice of country is significant. As is well known, Germany and Italy provided extensive military support to the Rebels during the Civil War, while Britain and France continued to pursue the Non-Intervention Pact and, historians agree, sometimes actively

¹⁴ In a similar vein, Balfour (2002: 281) writes: ‘attempts were made to overcome the religious contradiction implicit in using Muslims to fight Spaniards. In traditional discourse, the true Spain was Catholic and Spain’s enemy had always been the Arab. The “essential” identity of the Spaniard derived from the medieval struggle to liberate Spain from the Muslim infidel and install the only true religion, Catholicism. After the conquest of Granada in 1492 this meant continuing to purge the Spanish population of Muslims and Jews still covertly practising their religions. Yet in their discussions with friendly caids before the uprising, conspiratorial colonial officers would have stressed the commonality of Islam and Christianity against the anti-religious enemy.’

¹⁵ As many critics have pointed out, Leticia’s account ‘echoes Chacel’s years of writing in exile’ (Glenn 1991: 292; see also Mayock 2004: 45; Dávila Gonçalves 1999: 36-37; Zubiaurre 2002: 267). Many years later in 1989, when she was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Valladolid, Chacel talked about her exile: ‘Yo me fui allá con todo lo mío, con todo lo nuestro y volví con todo ello intacto. En el fondo, en mi último fondo, siento que nunca me fui, que no falté de mi tierra ni un día...’ (Chacel 1993a: 79). Rodríguez Fischer says that in *La sinrazón* ‘encontramos en estas páginas algo frecuente en la producción de los intelectuales españoles exiliados: la reflexión sobre España—interpretación de nuestro destino histórico, sentido de la cultura española, indagación en el ser español’ (Rodríguez Fischer 1990: 45-46). Chacel added a slightly different gloss to *La sinrazón* and also to *Memorias de Leticia Valle* in an interview with Delgado: ‘ese sentimiento o esos sentimientos no pueden traducirse más que si, realmente, mis personajes son españoles. Y creo que lo son, principalmente en *Memorias de Leticia Valle* y en *Teresa*. En *La sinrazón*, ya no tanto, porque en esta obra traté de hacer una visión hispano-argentina’ (quoted in Delgado 1975: 4).

hindered the Republican war effort (Graham 2005: 88-89; Preston 2006: 136-44, 160-62). Switzerland, however, remained neutral throughout both wars. It was the destination for many fleeing German-occupied Europe. In the months and years immediately following the Spanish Civil War, no one could have known that the Franco dictatorship would last as long as it did or that many exiles would not return to Spain for decades, if at all. Leticia's exile in Switzerland may, therefore, be considered a temporary measure. After silencing Daniel, and Nationalist historiography along with him, she has been temporarily removed to a place of safety, hidden in a house in Switzerland, placed rather comically 'detrás de la butaca' (Chacel 2010: 280). Her self-appointed task is to write her own story, reconstitute her history, and she tells us this in the first chapter when she is thinking about her father: 'Pero, ¿a qué conduce este discutir? Estamos muy lejos, como siempre estuvimos, con la diferencia de que ahora la distancia es una ventaja para mí: me aísla, es mi propiedad y no siento aquel deseo de explicaciones' (Chacel 2010: 84). In Switzerland, far away from her father, from Valladolid, from Daniel, she has a space in which to interpret events for herself, to exert her independence.

To conclude, by originating from a neutral space outside of Spain, Leticia's story reminds readers of the continued existence of alternative versions of Spanish history, ones that were being exiled or silenced within Spain itself. These historical and historiographical alternatives were incompatible with everything that Daniel represented: through his association with Menéndez Pelayo, the Spanish Inquisition, and the Crusades, he symbolizes right-wing, traditionalist interpretations of Spanish history, while his epithet 'rey moro' recalls the role of the colonial wars in Morocco in the lead up to the Civil War and the use of Moroccan conscripts and recruits during the war itself. The ferocity of Leticia's response and the way she dehumanizes Daniel seem all the more horrific when readers remember that she is only eleven. This is not an easy victory or an unqualified success: both sides have been brutalized. And, as Scarlett bluntly puts it, this is the story of what 'any outside observer would call child abuse' (Scarlett 1994: 78). Everyone is caught up in this conflict, even readers, who are forced into an uncomfortable position. The dilemma consists in the fact that while Leticia cannot be dismissed as a passive victim, to simply say that she

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

defeats Daniel is tantamount to saying that an eleven-year-old child is responsible for an adult’s behaviour, that Leticia is to blame for whatever it is that takes place behind that blank space on the page. On the other hand, to say she is not the author of her own success is to deny her agency in her hard-won victory and to ignore the deliberate and conscious way in which she sets about destroying Daniel and all that he represents.

For Peer Review

Works cited

Aguirre, Mariano, 1983. 'Rosa Chacel: La literatura femenina es una estupidez', *El País*, 'Libros', 30 January 1983: 5.

Arkinstall, Christine, 2011. *Histories, Cultures, and National Identities: Women Writing Spain, 1877-1984* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press).

Balfour, Sebastian, 2002. *Deadly Embrace: Morocco and the Road to the Spanish Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Benson, Ken, 1998. 'La deconstrucción del mito simbólico de la autoridad paterna en *Memorias de Leticia Valle*, de Rosa Chacel', in *Mitos: Actas del VII Congreso Internacional de la Asociación Española de Semiótica*, Alberto Navarro González and others, vol. 1 (University of Zaragoza), pp. 500-504.

Boyd, Carolyn P., 1998. *Historia Patria: Politics, History, and National Identity in Spain, 1875-1975* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).

Chacel, Rosa, 2010. *Memorias de Leticia Valle*, ed. Carmen Morán Rodríguez (Madrid: Iberoamericana Editorial Vervuert).

---, 1989-2004. *Obra completa*, ed. Carlos Pérez Chacel and Antonio Piedra, 8 vols (Valladolid: Fundación Jorge Guillén).

---, 2004. *Desde el amanecer*, in *Obra completa*, vol. 8: *Autobiografías* (Valladolid: Fundación Jorge Guillén), pp. 17-266.

---, 1993. 'Esquema de los problemas prácticos y actuales del amor', in *Obra completa*, vol. 4: *Artículos II* (Valladolid: Fundación Jorge Guillén), pp. 447-76.

---, 1993a. 'Discursos de Investidura de Doctor «*Honoris Causa*» por la Universidad de Valladolid', in *Obra completa*, vol. 3: *Artículos I* (Valladolid:

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

Fundación Jorge Guillén), pp. 73-79.

---, 1939. 'Memorias de Leticia Valle', *Sur*, 52: 14-27

Davies, Catherine, 1998. *Spanish Women's Writing 1849-1996* (London and Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Athlone Press).

Dávila Gonçalves, Michele C., 1999. *El archivo de la memoria: la novela de formación femenina de Rosa Chacel, Rosa Montero, Rosario Castellanos y Elena Poniatowska* (New Orleans: University Press of the South).

Delgado, Fernando G., 1975. 'Rosa Chacel y la necesidad del retorno', *Ínsula*, 34: 4.

Egido Martínez, Aurora Gloria, 1981. 'Los espacios del tiempo en *Memorias de Leticia Valle* de Rosa Chacel', *Revista de Literatura*, 43: 107-31.

Faszer-McMahon, Debra, 2006. 'Women and the Discourse of Underdevelopment in Rosa Chacel's *Memorias de Leticia Valle*', *Letras Femeninas*, 32.2: 13-32.

Fernández-Klohe, Carmen, 2005. *Rosa Chacel y las artes plásticas* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen).

Ferrús Antón, Beatriz, 2006. 'Pecando en el deleite de la meditación: sobre la narrativa de Rosa Chacel', *Arbor*, 182.719: 377-84.

Glenn, Kathleen, 1991. 'Fiction and Autobiography in Rosa Chacel's *Memorias de Leticia Valle*', *Letras Peninsulares*, 4.2-3: 285-94.

González González, Irene, 2007. 'La hermandad hispano-árabe en la política cultural del franquismo, 1936-1956', *Anales de Historia Contemporánea*, 23: 183-97.

Graham, Helen, 2005. *The Spanish Civil War: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Grau-Lleveria, Elena, 1998. 'La silenciosa presencia de la historia en *Memorias de Leticia Valle* de Rosa Chacel', in *Estudios en honor a Janet Pérez: el sujeto femenino en escritoras hispánicas*, ed. Susana Cavallo and others (Potomac, MD: Scripta Humanistica).

Herzberger, David K., 1995. *Narrating the Past: Fiction and Historiography in Postwar Spain* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press).

Johnson, Roberta, 1996. "'Self'-Consciousness in Rosa Chacel and María Zambrano', in *Self-Conscious Art: A Tribute to John W. Kronik*, ed. Susan L. Fischer (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press), pp. 54-72.

---, 2003. *Gender and Nation in the Spanish Modernist Novel* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press).

Kirkpatrick, Susan, 2003. *Mujer, modernismo y vanguardia en España (1898-1931)* (Madrid: Cátedra).

López Sáenz, María Carmen, 1994. 'La influencia de la estética orteguiana en Rosa Chacel', in *Actas del congreso en homenaje a Rosa Chacel*, ed. María Pilar Martínez Latre (Logroño: Universidad de La Rioja), pp. 107-20.

Madariaga, Rosa María de, 2006. *Los moros que trajo Franco*, Testimonios de la Guerra Civil (Barcelona: RBA).

Maier, Carol, 1994. 'Translator's Afterword: 13 Glosses', in Rosa Chacel, *Memoirs of Leticia Valle*, trans. Carol Maier (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press), pp. 165-98.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

---, 1992. 'Siting Leticia Valle: Questions of Gender and Generation', *Monographic Review*, 8: 79-98.

Mangini, Shirley, 1998. 'Woman, Eros, and Culture: The Essays of Rosa Chacel', *Spanish Women Writers and the Essay. Gender, Politics and the Self*, ed. Kathleen M. Glenn and Mercedes Mazquiarán de Rodríguez (Colombia: University of Missouri Press), pp.127-43.

---, 1993. 'Rosa Chacel', in *Spanish Women Writers: A Bio-Bibliographical Source Book*, ed. Linda Gould-Levine, Ellen Engelson Marson and Gloria Feiman Waldman (London and Westport, Conn: Greenwood), pp. 131-40.

---, 2001. *Las modernas de Madrid: las grandes intelectuales españolas de la vanguardia* (Barcelona: Península).

---, 1987. 'Women and Spanish Modernism: The Case of Rosa Chacel', *Anales de la Literatura Española Contemporánea*, 12: 17-28.

Marra-López, José R., 1963 *Narrativa española fuera de España (1939-1961)* (Madrid: Guadarrama).

Martin-Márquez, Susan, 2008. *Disorientations: Spanish Colonialism in Africa and the Performance of Identity* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press).

Mayock, Ellen, 2004. *The 'Strange Girl' in Twentieth-Century Spanish Novels Written by Women* (New Orleans: University Press of the South).

Moi, Toril, 1999. *What is a Woman? And Other Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Mora, Magdalena, 1987. 'La mujer y las mujeres en la *Revista de Occidente*: 1923-1936', *Revista de Occidente*, 74-75: 191-209.

Morán Rodríguez, Carmen, 2010. 'Estudio preliminar', in Rosa Chacel, *Memorias de Leticia Valle*, ed. Carmen Morán Rodríguez (Madrid: Iberoamericana Editorial Vervuert), pp. 11-80.

Murphy, Katharine, 2010. 'Monstrosity and the Modernist Consciousness: Pío Baroja versus Rosa Chacel', *Anales de la Literatura Española Contemporánea*, 35.1: 141-75.

---, 2010a. 'Unspeakable Relations: Eroticism and the Seduction of Reason in Rosa Chacel's *Memorias de Leticia Valle*', *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Studies*, 16: 51-72.

Newberry, Wilma, 1994. 'Rosa Chacel's Novel Needlework', *Journal of Interdisciplinary Literary Studies*, 6: 73-85.

Pattison, Lori Beth, 1993. *Engendering Selves: Modes of Representation in Rosa Chacel's First Four Novels*, unpublished PhD dissertation, The University of Kansas.

Pérez-Magallón, Jesús, 2003. 'Leticia Valle o la indeterminación genérica', *Anales de Literatura Española Contemporánea*, 28.1: 139-59.

Porlán, Alberto, 1984. *La sinrazón de Rosa Chacel* (Madrid: Anjana).

Preston, Paul, 2006. *The Spanish Civil War: Reaction, Revolution and Revenge* (London: Harper Perennial).

Requena Hidalgo, Cora, 2007. 'La deshumanización del arte en Rosa Chacel', *Artifara*, no. 7. Available at:
<http://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=2315143> (accessed 12 August 2014).

---, 2002. *Rosa Chacel 1889-1994* (Madrid: Ediciones del Orto).

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

Rodríguez, Ana, 1989. 'El magisterio de Ortega en Rosa Chacel', in *Homenaje al profesor Antonio Vilanova*, ed. Adolfo Sotelo Vázquez and Marta Cristina Carbonell, 2 vols (Barcelona: Universidad de Barcelona), vol. 2, pp. 567-77.

Rodríguez Fischer, Ana, 2000. 'Introducción a *Estación. Ida y vuelta, Teresa y Memorias de Leticia Valle*', in Rosa Chacel, *Obra completa*, vol. 5: *novelas II*, (Valladolid: Fundación Jorge Guillén), pp. 7-58.

---, 1990. 'Rosa Chacel en su circunstancia', in Dónoan and others, *Rosa Chacel: Premio Nacional de las Letras Españolas* (Barcelona: Anthropos), pp. 35-49.

Romero Salvadó, Francisco J., 2013. *Historical Dictionary of the Spanish Civil War* (Plymouth: Scarecrow Press).

Rosales, Elisa, 2000. '*Memorias de Leticia Valle*: Rosa Chacel o el delecto de lo inaudito', *Hispania*, 83: 222-31.

Scarlett, Elizabeth A., 1994. *Under Construction: The Body in Spanish Novels* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia).

Soldevila Durante, Ignacio, 1980. *La novela desde 1936* (Madrid: Alhambra).

Thomas, Gareth, 1990. *The Novel of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1975)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Valls, Rafael, 2000. 'Ideología franquista y enseñanza de la historia en España, 1938-1953', in *España bajo el franquismo*, ed. Josep Fontana (Barcelona: Crítica), pp. 230-45.

Zubiaurre, Maite, 2003. 'España, femenino plural: escrito autobiográfico, exilio y nación en Rosa Chacel y en María Zambrano', *Letras Peninsulares* 15.2: 267-86.